

PASTA NEWSLETTER

50 - October 2006

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

REPORTING [CREDITING & CREDENTIALING]

In the August issue we suggested that the national focus then about on 'Plain English' reporting and the Commonwealth Government's strongly expressed desire to standardise such across the country naturally also should include a serious attempt to incorporate credit and accountability into what goes home on school reports re participation, representation and leadership programs. In this issue are two sample data base suggestions, one list for a variety of such programs, another more specific to SRCs. Space permitting, we also include an original example of a format that might be used by your SRC to keep a regular record of what student leaders (and advisers!) are involved in year by year.

'READIN, RITIN, RITHMETIC' [CURRICULUM AND CREATION]

Which brings us, logically as well as instinctively, to another of those '3Rs'. In this case it's the traditional academic ones, those also brought up on the national public stage recently, amongst many other pronouncements, by the Hon. Ms Julie Bishop, current Commonwealth Minister for Education.

Not unlike the sometimes abrasive, sometimes fascinating but always crucial issues of reporting and communication (see third 'R'), the topic of a single curriculum across all of Australia's six states and two territories provides much food for thought. And comment.

Like other topics we have tried to introduce over a series of issues, perhaps this can be the start of a real discussion (not 'a debate', please no, but a REAL

discussion, with REAL outcomes) on the REAL curriculum that SRC and suchlike activity programs can offer.

All we offer this time is an excerpt – as always we hope one of practical professional development assistance - for advisers and students, for principals and administrators, for business and the media. It condenses some crucial curriculum thoughts, drawn initially from the nine years of successful international cooperation PASTA has initiated with like-minded national organisations in North America through its leadership tours. It asks, once more, for your consideration in cooperating and supporting this, as all, like-minded educational endeavours.

RESPONDING [COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION]

It's both delightful and sobering to note that this is the 50th Issue of this Newsletter. While we thank all those who over the past years have contributed to its various topics and opinions, most of all PASTA sincerely thanks *Connect* Editor and Founder Roger Holdsworth. His steady and supportive communication and his dogged persistence in permitting and enabling us to add these Newsletters to each successive issue of *Connect*, have done more to sustain us in the face of criticism and/or silence from elsewhere than any number of motivational tracks or policy pronouncements.

While our first two Newsletters were larger, booklet style efforts, their pre-IT days production quality and irregular publication deadlines were stale. They pale in the face of six issues a

year (with the occasional double dipper), plus all that extra "ISRC" Bulletin material which did so much to bring that engaging project to fruition in Sydney in December 2000.

Thanks Roger. May both you and *Connect* continue to do what so needs doing– in all Australian states and amongst all countries viz. communicating and cooperating with each other - to make peace possible and keep the admirable visions we all say we share, those of real participation, representation and leadership not just alive in print but effective within our schools and souls.

RESPONDING (REVISITED, AS WE ALL ALWAYS MUST)

To emphasise the key link that good advisers doing good things in our schools are between effective talk and its opposites, in this issue, space permitting, we include a small portion of one of the sample modules PASTA was in the process of producing before lack of responsiveness from advisers indicated little support to continue that work. It is in fact, about communication. We hope it illustrates in a very small way what still might be on offer should advisers and schools really communicate with us to show they really want an organization to support and lobby for them by becoming members.

For those of you who already are – or once were but forgot to renew – a gentler reminder that annual membership fees were due as of the new financial year in July. Please contact your Secretary, Ellen Sheerin at:

esheerin@ozemail.com.au

Check out 'How To Join' page on our Website:
<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

Student Leadership/Representation/Participation Group Profile and Record of Achievement An Outline of Recommended Database Items for Use With:

SRC (Student Representative Councils)

PARL (Student Parliaments)

PREF (Prefects)

LT (Leadership Teams)

ACT (Action Teams)

PSP (Peer Support Leaders)

PM (Peer Mediators)

PR (Peer Reading Tutors)

MEN (Mentors)

MON (Monitors - eg Library)

PK (Public Speakers)

DEB (Debaters)

MT (Mock Trials)

MUNA (Model United Nations)

YF (Youth Forums)

PROJ (Project or Issue Oriented-Groups - eg Streamwatch)

CLUB (Special Interest Clubs)

TM (Tournament of Minds &

similar academic events)

JOUR (Journalism /

Publications)

ART (Performing & Visual Arts)

SPRT (Sports Captains,

Referees)

COMM (Community Groups)

FUND (Fund-Raising

Committees)

CLAS (timetabled class

substantive leadership roles)

MISC (Other participation

activities)

or create your own category

Some File Headings for Governance Groups Such as SRCs

NAME

YEAR

MAIN ROLE IN SRC/LT

OTHER REPRESENTATIVE

ROLE

(eg School Council/Curriculum Ctte etc)

OTHER GROUPS IN SCHOOL

(activity groups to which student contributes)

OUT OF SCHOOL

(eg Local Youth Council, Scouts/Guides, Sports Groups etc)

COMMITTEE 1

(any SRC Standing Committees

- note if Chair or Secretary of)

COMMITTEE 2 (any SRC Ad

Hoc Committees/create more as needed)

PAST ROLES IN SRC

(and other significant leader positions)

ATTENDANCE:

(E: Executive)

(SRC: Full SRC)

(Ctte: Committees)

SAMPLE DATA BASE FOR CONTINUOUS RECORD OF LEADERSHIP/REPRESENTATION/ PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY INVOLVEMENT

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT: Year or number of terms involved recorded in each relevant column. Final column can list total approximate hours and/or number of activities or terms and/or descriptive entries such as:

Position: Officer/Representative/Member/Mentor/Consultant

Active Role: Leader/Worker/Spokesperson/Specialist Skill/Participant

Value: Outstanding/Influential/Useful/Supportive/Minimal

Frequency: Substantial/Consistent/Occasional/Varied/Specific Project

SCHOOL: _____ **CURRENT YEAR:** 20____

Activity Organisation and Advisers: see separate data base

SRC, Career, Year, IT or Other Staff Monitoring This Data Base:

Student Name & Year	Years/Terms Served	Positions + Year in them	Active Role	Value	Frequency	Other Comment
<i>Years here</i>		X	X	X	X	
<i>Primary School</i>						
<i>Other High School</i>						
<i>SRC Rep</i>						
<i>SRC Officer</i>						
<i>LT/Prefects</i>						
<i>Yr/Class Capt</i>						
<i>Peer Programs</i>						
<i>Monitors</i>						
<i>Academic</i>						
<i>Arts</i>						
<i>Sport</i>						
<i>Club</i>						
<i>Journalism</i>						
<i>Fund-Raising</i>						
<i>Issue Project</i>						
<i>Camps/Confs</i>						
<i>Community</i>						
<i>Classroom</i>						
<i>Other</i>						

RESPONDING [COMMUNICATION and COOPERATION]

The following extracts are from a small section of one of PASTA's early resource modules. The overall topic was "What Is Communication?".

The parts in brackets were added to the theory components in recognition of the gap that often exists between resource materials that are **not** accompanied by group leader professional development training. They provide examples of the kinds of things that the facilitator – be he or she the regular SRC Adviser, another teacher or parent and/or a trained student leader – could use – as is or adapted to their own style of speaking – to provide hands-on activities and positive feedback for the group being workshoped. Communication skills, of course, is only one of many educational aspects of the overall SRC Curriculum.

Interpersonal Communication

Real understanding of another person happens only when the receiver's impression matches closely what the sender intended in his or her expression. **There are five components that contribute to effective interpersonal communication.**

Self-Concept - As we mentioned earlier, the most important single factor affecting your communication with others is your self-concept - how you see yourself and your situation.

I couldn't do that well myself when I first starting working with you this year, but now that I know you better I'm getting a feel for it. For example, one way I see myself in relation to your student council is ... but when I try and communicate this to some other students (or say 'staff' if it feels right to use it here generically) I start to feel as if ...

What about yourselves? Anyone here care to offer us an insight into how you see yourself amongst our leadership team now? ... As an SRC leader, with other students?

Listening - Everyone needs information that can only be acquired by listening. Listening is much more than just hearing with your ears; it is an intellectual and emotional process that searches for meaning and understanding. Effective listening means both hearing and understanding the sender's message.

I looked at this again last night and really liked it. It's a great activity to practice regularly ... paraphrasing involves restating in your own words what you think you've just heard ... For example, if I say to you ... tell me what you think I said.

(See 'Paraphrasing Activity' elsewhere in this module for specific examples if needed).

Got it now? Who can now describe paraphrasing for me? ... Great! ... Now, let's try you in pairs. First volunteers? Remember - if you're the sender, don't try and correct your receiver. Let him or her finish first. Then restate your message in different ways and let them try again until you're satisfied you've been paraphrased correctly.

Give as much feedback as you need to get the messages conveyed correctly?

Clarity - Many of us find it difficult to say what we mean or to express what we feel. We assume that other people understand what we mean. To communicate your meaning effectively, you must have a clear picture in your mind of what you are trying to express and be able to clarify and elaborate on it. It also helps to be receptive to feedback (how people respond to your message) and use it to further guide your communication efforts.

This is a good one. We need a few volunteers to describe a simple picture so that the rest of us can draw it. The trick is ... You must give your instructions to people behind you while holding the picture in front of you. And ... there is no feedback allowed.

(Have several possible pictures, largely lined drawings, available)

Coping with Anger - Inability to deal with anger frequently results in breakdown of communication. Some people handle their anger by suppressing it, fearing that others will respond in kind. Expression of emotions is important to building good relationships with others - individually or in your groups.

This is an interesting one to try. If you're game? We need a few

volunteers to do some challenging role -playing ... Excellent ... You can work in pairs or threes if you like too? ... Even 'Excellenter!' ... Now here's some messages the group leaders have prepared for you. We want you to first present them in an straightforward neutral sort of way. Then have a go at them while being churned up furiously inside. Finally present them in such a way that you show you have overcome such anger and are able now to explain things calmly and rationally without getting upset about what has happened so much that your message is overwhelmed by your emotion.

(Note to group leaders: Examples can be found in PD, Drama and English related texts. Other PASTA modules on workshop techniques for facilitators also will have examples.)

Self-Disclosure - The ability to talk truthfully about yourself is basic to effective communication. You cannot really communicate with another person or group, or get to know them, unless there is self-disclosure on both sides. An effective communicator can create a climate of trust.

I have faith in you to handle this one well. Even though it's often the hardest. Everyone can try this first on their own. Then choose a couple of people you're happy to share your thoughts with. We might even ask for a few self-revealing volunteers at the end. It's pretty simple really. Just be honest.

OK. On your own now, think of a situation where you were really open and honest with someone. A family member? A peer? A teacher? An employer? Make it something that's really happened in your life. Did the other persons respond in kind or not? How did that make you feel? ...

Good. Now find a couple of others and share your stories. Or new ones. If possible, try and think of at least one situation amongst you where self-disclosure worked for effective communication on both sides. In this school? In your SRC?

There's been some good thinking here on all this. Let's congratulate each other.

A NOTE RE PASTA'S SRC LEADERSHIP TOURS

... or, put the way we had originally hoped - and still hope - they will be perceived by those with open minds and supportive natures as ...

Annual SRC, School, System and Association Action Plans

"The depths and still greater heights of student council representation"

The Magnificent Seven Outcomes:

Imaginative National and International Representation which dispels ignorance and moves education, politics, media towards a brighter future;

Invaluable personal benefits to students and advisers of growing as a team in order to experience how things work elsewhere;

Incalculable benefits to schools and SRCs in Australia and abroad through reciprocal visits, school exchanges and skills brought home;

Identifiable stages of the pre-Tour program: Advertising, Applications, Selections, Experienced teachers, Ex-delegates and parents as advisers;

Intensive Group Orientation, Training Manuals, Communications, Parent and School Awareness, pre-tour exchange preparations;

Informative planning of on-Tour itineraries: curriculum content, host family and school experiences, travel, time, terrific people;

Insightful bread and butter issues: physical tolerances, financial considerations, self-help, expectations of representing one's country as well as one's school and district.

'The Team'

Based on the PASTA SRC Tour's annually remarkable outcomes, which grow apace from Orientation 'Strengths and Limitations' Activities through young lifetimes ...

BUT, if explicitly embedded in our total curriculum, could very well be a statement of the values of SRCs - led by skilled advisers, allowed and enabled to be recognised and supported in their own right as teachers of SRCs and the whole gamut of positive participation activities:

"... The assured development once again of a motivated, focused and complementary team of students and adults willing to be extraordinarily open and clear about themselves, their high expectations, their uncertainty that they can live up to them, their concerns, their abilities, their

weaknesses and needs etc. In short we now have developing a group that by their own admission and our observation share amongst them these strengths: determination, self-understanding, bright personalities, positive outlooks, self-motivation, experience, truthfulness, negotiation and mediation skills, flexibility, confidence, public speaking ability, trust, organisational skills, persistence, a desire to 'get things done!', fun, are fun-loving and easy-going, good-will, courage, helpfulness, are 'people persons', focused, motivated and 'want to be heard' ..."

Schools, Media, Sponsors

Interested in helping these tours to continue?

E-mail and say 'Hi'.

Request copies of:

- International SRC Delegate Orientation Folder Materials and Past Tour Reports;
- "How's Your Representation?" Cross-Cultural Knowledge Kits
- Full (or Summary) History of These Tours (which have promoted and expanded skills and 'Australian Values' here and abroad)

Email:

kingstons@exemail.com.au and
suepage@ozemail.com.au

**Applications open now
for PASTA Overseas SRC
Leadership Tours 2007 and
the 3rd ISRC Tour in 2008.
Contact the PASTA Secretary.**

**The PASTA Newsletter is edited by
Ken Page and distributed
bi-monthly as a supplement
to Connect magazine.**

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>